



Taylor & Francis
Taylor & Francis Group

Simon Vratzian and Armenian Nationalism

Author(s): Richard G. Hovannisian

Source: *Middle Eastern Studies*, Oct., 1969, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Oct., 1969), pp. 192-220

Published by: Taylor & Francis, Ltd.

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4282291>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

Taylor & Francis, Ltd. is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Middle Eastern Studies*

Simon Vratzian and Armenian Nationalism

Richard G. Hovannisian

'In the beginning was the land of Armenia and the Kingdom of Bagratuni—Ani. And Ani became Volga. And Volga became Crimea. And Crimea became Don. And Don became Republic of Armenia. And Republic became the entire world. And the Armenian became a citizen of the world. This is my story, and, changing the names, the story of all Armenians, past and present.' So begins *Kianki Ughinerov* ('Along Life's Ways'), the semi-autobiographical work of Simon Vratzian. In these brief, poetic sentences, an Armenian journalist, educator, politician, and statesman depicts his life and that of his forebears, the people of Ani.

Ani was the resplendent capital of the Bagratid kingdom, which spanned the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries of the Christian era. This Armenian kingdom, the last to rise on the Armenian Plateau—an area bounded on the north and the south by the Pontus and the Taurus mountain chains, on the west by the Euphrates River, and on the east by the highlands skirting Lake Sevan—was renowned for its commercial and economic prosperity, for its monumental architectural achievements, and especially for its unique blending of cultural currents from Occident and Orient. Long after the downfall of the Bagratid kingdom, the people of Ani, despite the slaughter or captivity of hundreds of thousands of Armenians and the influx of Turkic-Moslem tribesmen, refused to quit their land—that is, until the fourteenth century, when devastating earthquakes, drought, and famine added to their many misfortunes. The citizens of the once brilliant metropolis could endure no more, and, taking as a memorial the great sculptured doors of the cathedral of Ani, thirty thousand families struck out toward the Caucasus Mountains in quest of a more tranquil life. Thus began the great trek that was to lead the Aniites to the North Caucasus, the Volga, the Crimea, the Don, the Republic of Armenia, and finally to the entire world.

In the valleys of the North Caucasus, a relatively small group of Aniites founded the city of Armavir and, though eventually forgetting the Armenian language, long cherished the native traditions of their abandoned homeland. Most of the thousands of Aniites, however, deeming the Caucasus unsuitable for a new home, pressed on to the banks of the Volga River. There they were welcomed by the Mongols of the Golden Horde, who profited from the crafts and technical skill of the Armenians. For nearly a half century the Aniites played an active role in the economic life of the Volga Basin, but then suddenly, for a reason still unknown, they deserted their towns, schools, and churches, and moved swiftly westward. Neither the entreaties nor the threats of their Mongol masters could stop the exodus.

After many days the great host of Aniites halted at the entrance to the Crimean Peninsula. Here the Armenian leaders were locked in heated debate. Some urged that the caravans continue to the north-west, while

most advised proceeding into the Crimea. Advance parties had already reported that the Aniites would be welcomed by the Crimean Tatar khans as well as by the Genoese, who controlled the coastal regions. The dispute was not resolved, however, and the people of Ani parted ways. One group pushed on to the north-west, where it laid the foundations for the long and colourful history of the Armenian communities of the Ukraine, Galicia, and Poland. The Polish kings, holding these settlers in high esteem, granted them commercial privileges and internal autonomy for many generations. The larger group of Aniites, however, advanced into the Crimea, where, as anticipated, they were granted large tracts of land and the right to live according to their customs and canon law. Armenian cities and villages rose throughout the Crimea. The Aniites, few of whom could still remember their native land, had at last found a new home. Here the children of Ani prospered and multiplied until the close of the eighteenth century, when, as a result of the southward expansion of Russia, they were uprooted once again.

Emissaries of Empress Catherine II (1762–96) warned the Aniites that war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire for control of the Crimea was imminent and, to escape the ravages of battle, the Armenians should temporarily leave the Crimea. Catherine's tactic was aimed at weakening Moslem control in the Crimea by removing from it the most important commercial and agricultural elements. After long deliberation, the Armenian leaders succumbed to the Russian pressure and prepared their people for departure. The Armenians, believing that the evacuation would be of short duration, buried their treasures and entrusted their properties to their Tatar neighbours. Then, praying for the last time in their churches throughout the peninsula, they moved *en masse* into Russian territory. As predicted, the Russo-Turkish war came to pass, and eventually the Crimea was annexed by Catherine II. Most of the Aniites, however, were prohibited from reclaiming their lands. The astounded Armenians were informed that they could settle in any area of southern Russia except the Crimea. Catherine intended to populate the southern steppelands with dependable, hardworking Christians and used the Aniites in implementing this policy.

In 1779, after months of searching for a suitable site on which to begin a new life, the descendants of Ani selected a district on the right bank of the Don River near the Sea of Azov. There, next to the garrison of Rostov, they founded the city of New Nakhichevan and, in the countryside around it, five villages: Chaldir, Topti, Little Sala, Great Sala, and Nesvita. This Armenian island in southern Russia soon flourished and during the nineteenth century gave many sons to the Armenian cultural and political renaissance. Thus, when Simon Vratzian (Simavon Gruzian*) was born in Great Sala in 1882, his Aniite forefathers had already traversed the milestones, 'And Ani became Volga; and Volga became Crimea; and Crimea became Don.' It was during his lifetime that 'Don became Republic of Armenia. And Republic became the entire world.'

As a child, Simavon grew under the shadow of the nearby parish

* A patriotic but not too intelligent teacher of Simavon incorrectly assumed that Gruzian was an aberration of 'Gruzin', the Russian word for 'Georgian'. The teacher therefore decided to Armenianize the name by using 'Vratz', the Armenian word for 'Georgian'. Thus, on wrong premises, Gruzian became Vratzian, a name later used as a pseudonym and then as a legal name.

church and learned to talk in the colourful dialect of the Aniites. He was strongly influenced by his grandmother, who was stern and loving, wise and humorous, captivating the young boy. The pattern of Simavon's life changed abruptly when he was five, for his father, an ambitious provider, had accepted the position of overseer on an estate in the neighbouring province of the Kuban. Leaving Great Sala, the Gruzian family settled among the Cossacks near the village of Timashovka. There, young Simavon first attended school, but to the horror of his mother and grandmother, he soon began to converse predominantly in Russian and to adopt many of the mannerisms of his Cossack playmates. Such behaviour was not at all unnatural among the children of the Armenian families that had moved into the Kuban, where neither Armenian church nor school existed to perpetuate the language and traditions of Ani:

We were very happy. I was proud that my father was in charge of such a large estate and that my mother governed many servants. Our grandmother, 'Medsa', would say that we had everything but bird's milk. Our playmates were the Russian peasant children with whom we spent our time wandering through the fields picking strawberries and gooseberries or else snitching cucumbers and watermelons, swimming in the stream, fishing, gathering birds' eggs.

At school my closest companion was Maria. It was pleasant to sit next to her, to feel her warm body, and when outdoors to pick sour cherries, to sing and to breathe together. The first book that I read, Gogol's *Taras Bulba*, we read together. We read interchangeably, at first barely putting the words together, later with the fluency of a school master. With what great enthusiasm and pleasure did we read behind the great house, in the garden, under the cherry trees! We were blissful. Yes, blissful, but why was my mother so unhappy? She complained so bitterly that we were forgetting the Armenian tongue, that my sister had become a 'Maruska', that instead of Simavon, my name was now Sëmka. True, we spoke Russian most of the time, but what was wrong with that? This was true of other Armenian families in the area. Their Mariam had become Masha, their Petros, Petia, their Shushan, Susanna. So what!

It is probable that Simavon would have been engulfed by the foreign influences had it not been for his mother's determination that her children would remain Armenian. At the price of precipitating a marital and economic crisis, the strong-willed woman compelled her husband to sell the estate he had recently purchased and to return nearly empty-handed to Great Sala and its less affluent life:

My mother was in deep mourning. She could not accept this fate. Her children were slipping from her hands. She would tell how a duck's egg had been put into the nest of one of our hens. When the chicks were hatched, the mother hen made no distinction, but one day when she had taken her brood near the shore of the lake, the duckling hopped into the water and swam happily away. In vain had the hen run up and down the shore, flapping her wings, frantically calling back her 'chick'. My mother would then beat her knees and protest to my father, 'Our situation is the same, our chicks are swimming away from us.' He too was concerned; but how could we leave the prosperity he had just

attained after years of hard labour? Returning to our village meant throwing ourselves back into the lap of poverty. My father wouldn't hear of it. But my mother was insistent; 'Our bread be cursed,' she would exclaim with tears in her eyes. 'It is better to eat the paltry dry bread of our village, to live in hunger if only our children remain Armenian, attend the Armenian church, and talk in the Armenian way.' And when Count Korzhevich came to request the hand of my sister for his son, the hurricane that my mother stirred swept us right back to Great Sala.

Back in Great Sala, Simavon soon regained fluency in Armenian and, enrolling in the parish school, began to read, to his mother's great joy, in the alphabet of his Aniite forebears. Before long, the instruction proved too elementary for the intelligent boy. He was therefore sent to New Nakhichevan's prelacy school, the most highly regarded Armenian secondary school in southern Russia. Though bored by the mandatory courses in theology, Simavon Gruzian—now Simon Vratzian—applied himself diligently to the study of history, literature, and the four required languages: Russian, Armenian, French, and Latin. While at the prelacy school, Vratzian came into contact with the emerging Armenian secret societies, the Social Democrat Hnchakist and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Hai Heghapokhakan Dashnaktsutiun). New Nakhichevan had already given a number of romanticist-nationalist poets and writers to the Armenian renaissance and Simon Vratzian's generation was to provide many political leaders. The attention of nearly all Armenian intellectuals was focused on the unbearable conditions suffered by the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire. The secret societies, imbued with nineteenth-century humanitarian and socialist principles, demanded security of life and property as well as a degree of self-rule for the Armenians of Turkey.

In tsarist Russia, membership in a conspiratorial society, even one whose activities and goals were directed toward another country, was both illegal and hazardous. This, however, did not deter the many Armenian youths who risked imprisonment and exile to further the aims of these organizations. In 1898, while still in his teens, Simon Vratzian, carried along by the enthusiasm of his generation, entered the ranks of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation. From that time to his death, a full seventy years, he dedicated himself to his party regardless of its vicissitudes of fortune. Vratzian chuckled as he recounted how he became a Dashnakist:

Sometimes an insignificant event leaves a great impact on a person. Imagine yourself hurrying to catch a train for a very pressing reason when suddenly something happens to the wheel of the car and it grinds to a halt—the train moves and passes by right under your nose. All is ruined. Dejected, you return home, a most unfortunate man. But just a few hours later you hear that the train has had a terrible accident; hundreds have been killed or maimed. You too could have been one of those poor creatures. You give thanks to the Creator and bless the tyre that spared you. You now feel yourself a very fortunate man indeed. Such is life.

This leads me to say that my becoming a member of Dashnaktsutiun was quite accidental. Of course, I, like many others, dreamed of Sassun and Zeitun, and the protagonists of the novelist Raffi had become my

greatest heroes. We second- and third-year students at the New Nakhichevan prelacy school were burning with the fire of patriotism and were threatening to crush Turkey and to free Armenia 'with turnips and parsnips', but we still had no inkling of revolution or of a revolutionary organization.

Then one day a classmate whispered, 'Come to my room tomorrow night. It is very important; don't breathe a word to anyone.' A thousand years passed before 'tomorrow night' finally arrived. At the designated place about a dozen students gazed attentively upon a serious looking, black-bearded youth. He began to speak: 'We, the Armenians of Russia, are living comfortably, while over there, in Armenia, our brothers and sisters are suffering under the yoke of Turkish oppression. We must organize, collect money, buy weapons, and with our hands liberate Mother Armenia. The youth must move.' There was little need of fiery words to move us. Raffi had already moved us. We soon learned that the orator represented the Hnchakist party, that the Hnchakist party was the first revolutionary party, and that we would form a student circle. I was selected to meet with the young man to receive the programme and by-laws of the organization. Thus we were now revolutionaries, members of the secret society. On the appointed day I climbed to the second floor of the building where the young man lived, but to my utter confusion there were two doors facing one another. What if I were to ring at the wrong one? Finally making a choice and mustering courage, I rang; soon a curly haired, pleasant-looking man with smiling eyes greeted me. I was perplexed, but the youth attempted to put me at ease, enquiring if I had come on Society business. I was pledged to secrecy, but the man already knew of the Society; perhaps he was a comrade of the other. At last, I explained that I had come for the programme and by-laws. 'Very good, very good,' he said lightheartedly. 'We'll fix everything up.' He gave me a bundle and commanded that I show it to no strangers and that the day of our scheduled meeting be changed. Later, when my student comrades and I opened the package, we found the 'Programme of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation'. We were, to say the least, confused.

Vratzian then relates how the mystery was solved during the rescheduled meeting:

The curly haired young man explained that there were two parties, the Hnchakist and Dashnaktsutun, that the Hnchakist was centralist while Dashnaktsutun was decentralist, that the Hnchakist was doomed to self-destruction, and that the true revolutionaries were Dashnakists, that Raffi was a Dashnakist, that Khrimian Hairik, the firebrand patriarch, was a Dashnakist. Centralist-decentralist didn't mean a thing to us, but that Raffi and Hairik were Dashnakists was enough for us to realize that it was foolish to think further about becoming Hnchakist. And so we became Dashnakists, swearing upon the programme to serve the party until death. Our circle became the first Dashnakist youth group in New Nakhichevan.

Our members were bound closely to one another, and we kept ourselves mysteriously apart from our classmates as if to announce, 'See, we know things about which you haven't the slightest idea'. At our weekly meetings we were sometimes visited by a field worker, who

would speak about the programme or activity of Dashnaktsutun. But normally we had our meetings to ourselves and we took them very seriously. An interesting part of these was the reading and discussion of a composition prepared by one of us on a vital national issue. Our group also had its own small library and even a hand press on which we secretly printed political leaflets. With our two pistols, a Bulldog and a Smith-Wesson, we would train to become 'revolutionaries' by conducting target practice behind the slaughter house. And the most important thing was that we were young, energetic, and full of belief. What Dashnaktsutun was we didn't understand too well, but Dashnaktsutun was in us, in our minds, our souls, our bodies, our entire being. And everything seemed so easy and so attainable.

Having completed his studies in the New Nakhichevan prelacy school, young Vratzian left the familiar shores of the Don River in 1900 to further his education at the Gevorgian Jemaran (Academy) in Etchmiadzin, the Holy See of the Church of Armenia. Etchmiadzin was in the province of Erevan, the core of so-called Russian Armenia, an area annexed by the tsars during the first three decades of the nineteenth century:

Now I was a student at the Gevorgian Jemaran. For us newcomers everything was fascinating—the beautiful building of the Jemaran, the gardens, the new dormitory. . . . The Plain of Ararat is exquisite, especially early in the morning when the sun has just risen. Through a thin mist rises the titan Masis (Ararat), his small companion at his side. The holy mountain of the Land of the Armenians is awesome—the like of which I have seen nowhere. The anchor and the peak so harmonious and balanced, its proud stance, its snow-crested peak so often draped in a halo of clouds.

Though the Armenians had been relatively content under Russian rule, they were severely restricted culturally and politically. Among these limitations was the ban on secular schools of higher learning. The Armenians, however, had found a way to circumvent this obstacle by utilizing the only legal schools, the seminaries, as centres for advanced secular education. Thus the Gevorgian Jemaran, technically a seminary training young men for the clergy, was effectively used as a cover to inculcate the maturing generation with the concepts of liberalism, nationalism, and socialism. Few students actually took holy vows:

From the Armenian point of view, the Jemaran provided a healthy, intense national education that was naturally opposed to the Russification policies of the tsars. Considering the eastern realities of the time, being a Jemaran student meant becoming an educated, well-rounded disciple of Armenian studies, imbued with patriotism and the urge to serve the nation. The Jemaran played an enlightening and revolutionary role in Armenian life. If ever I have done a worthwhile thing for the Armenian people, that I owe entirely to the Jemaran, where my personality was formed, where I was able to deepen my thought processes, to develop my own view of the world, and to expand my horizons. The Jemaran was founded on love and dedication to everything that was Armenian—to the Armenian past, the Armenian future, Armenian culture, Armenian art—in short, Armenianism.

Among the upper classes of the Jemaran, the radicalism of the students reached far beyond that of their instructors. Lectures in theology and the classics were often interrupted by hecklers who recited passages from atheistic or agnostic works. These students, enamoured of socialism and nationalism, also formed their own secret circles or established branches of the Hnchakist and Dashnakist political organizations.

Simon Vratzian remained at the Gevorgian Jemaran until 1906, adding Greek and German to his already solid foundation in the Slavic and Romance languages. A review of his activities at the Jemaran would indicate, however, that he was involved as much in political affairs as in educational pursuits. With his student associates, he frequently met in the Gevorgian woods to read and discuss the clandestine socialistic-anarchistic literature smuggled into the Romanov Empire and passed from hand to hand:

Most of the students were Dashnakists. There were also a small group of Hnchakists, a few persons who thought of themselves as Social Democrats, and then the rest, those whom we considered the ignorant swamp creatures or confused sheep. While the faculty of the Jemaran was conservative, the Jemaran was Dashnakist. It is interesting that the most conservative schools in the Caucasus turned out the most ardent Dashnakists whereas the most dedicated Bolsheviks emerged from the liberal Nersisian Jemaran of Tiflis, a seminary under Dashnakist influence. Our Dashnakist organization at the Jemaran had more than a hundred members, divided into several groups. The members of one group did not know the identity of those in the others: only the chairman of each knew one another and they in turn met with me, the general president. Our activities included the study and discussion of revolutionary issues, the distribution of illegal literature, and the dissemination of Dashnakist propaganda and ideology into the surrounding villages.

In the midst of his Jemaran life, Vratzian, the entire student body, the political societies—indeed all Armenians of Russia—were thrust into frenzied activity by an unprecedented manifestation of tsarist Armenophobia. The nationality policy of the last dynasts of the Romanov line was based on Russification of the minorities, but the intensity of the drive varied from ruler to ruler and from year to year. In June, 1903, the governor-general of the Caucasus, Prince Grigorii Golitsyn, prevailed upon Tsar Nicholas II to espouse a stringent policy again, particularly toward the Armenians. Warning that Armenian nationalism had become rampant, he stressed that the source of trouble was the network of parish schools under the jurisdiction of the Church of Armenia. Golitsyn persuaded Tsar Nicholas to confiscate the properties of the Church and place its schools under centralized governmental administration as a means of accelerating the process of Russification.

Prince Grigorii and Tsar Nicholas miscalculated, however, for instead of weaning the Armenians away from nationalism, the imperial decree expropriating the Church properties and schools drove even the conservatives into the radical camp. Those who had earlier opposed the revolutionary societies now turned to them for direction. Ironically, the Armenian extremists, who had consistently criticized the reactionary role of the Church, now rose in its defence. In a two-year reign of terror, scores

of tsarist bureaucrats and functionaries were felled by the knives, bullets, and bombs of the virulent revolutionaries. The Armenian refusal to submit was rewarded in 1905, for, with Russia shaken by war with Japan and by strikes and revolution at home, the Tsar relented, rescinded the controversial edict, and restored the properties and schools to the Church. Golitsyn, gravely wounded by the terrorists, was replaced by a much more tactful and discreet administrator. Throughout the Church crisis, Simon Vratzian organized many demonstrations and, with provocative propaganda leaflets and articles, exhorted the Armenian people to rise against tyranny and to defend the rights of the nation. By 1905 he was highly regarded by Dashnaktsutiun's most seasoned leaders, who now weighed his views in planning party strategy.

Completing his studies at the Gevorgian Jemaran in 1906, Vratzian, then twenty-four years old, returned to New Nakhichevan as a professional party field worker in Dashnaktsutiun's Nalbandi region, which encompassed most of southern Russia:

I had just returned to New Nakhichevan with plans to go on to the University of St Petersburg. But the Nalbandi Central Committee urged me to remain as a field worker, an 'honour' which in vain I strove to decline; I thus put aside my visions of university life. Among my various duties was the movement of weapons from the Rostov-Nakhichevan region to Baku. These weapons, acquired during the 1905 Revolution and the subsequent Armeno-Tatar clashes, were transported by a young lady, Siranush, and her two companions. Siranush was most attractive, her hair full, face pleasant, breasts rich, eyes playful, but mouth closed. She was a courageous girl, cold blooded and resourceful. She had already taken several suitcases of 'goods' from Nakhichevan to Baku. The manner in which she and her accomplices conducted themselves was amazing. They acted as if they were on a pleasure trip and as if their suitcases were filled with dainty feminine things. They joked, teased one another, and flirted with the passers by. When necessary they laughed aloud or whispered giddily. In short, they seemed carefree and full of innocence, but once they found themselves in the security of their train compartment, their chatter stopped as their tensed nerves slowly unravelled. Suitcases of weapons and bullets reached the Caucasus from many points in my district. The first stop was Baku, after which they were distributed over various routes into Turkish Armenia. All of this took place under the very eyes of the many station guards and the secret police.

As a field worker for the Nalbandi region, Vratzian also visited the numerous villages and cities having sizeable Armenian communities:

On one such visit I stayed with my uncle in Armavir. He was the owner of a large sunflower-oil factory. The workers, mostly Russian peasants, received meagre wages and suffered from terrible working conditions. My uncle proudly showed me his factory; thereafter I found occasion to visit it almost daily. And then one morning the shriek of the factory whistle sounded unnaturally; soon a clamour filled the courtyard of my uncle's mansion. The workers were on strike; they had come to petition for better working conditions and higher pay. My uncle swore furiously. 'Should such a thing happen?' he cried. Of course

I agreed that such a thing should not have happened. In the end, the factory administration had to give in and satisfy the workers' demands. My uncle never forgave me when he learned that the author of both the strike and the petition had been his nephew, a guest in his house.

In 1907, as the delegate of the Nalbandi region, Vratzian journeyed abroad for the first time to attend Dashnaktsutun's Fifth General Congress in Vienna. As a result of the Church crisis and the recent turbulent events in Russia, many leaders had shifted politically to the left. Vratzian, a member of this radical wing at the General Congress, assisted in steering to approval a revised party programme, which included explicit socialist principles. Though the freedom and the security of the Turkish Armenians remained the basic goal, Dashnaktsutun now also endorsed socialism as the most suitable economic-administrative system for all Armenians. In that same year, 1907, the party was granted membership in the Second Socialist International.

In 1908, with permission from Dashnaktsutun's supreme body, the Bureau, Simon Vratzian enrolled in the St Petersburg school of law and also attended the pedagogical institute at night to obtain a teaching credential:

My university years were filled with new experiences. The intellectual and civic atmosphere of the capital city, Russia's most renowned professors, the literary and political meetings, the theatre and museums, the incessant reading, and the association with intellectual circles and individuals opened broad new horizons before me. Petersburg filled the gaps remaining from Etchmiadzin. Armed with knowledge and engrossed with many captivating plans, I stood at the portals of a new life.

But Vratzian pursued his studies at a time when Russia, having weathered the war with Japan and the 1905 Revolution, was entrenched in the so-called Stolypin reaction, during which hundreds of actual or suspected enemies of the Romanov régime were imprisoned or exiled. Even as many of his acquaintances were being abused by the secret police, Vratzian penned numerous anti-governmental articles, appearing in a score of clandestine journals and written under half a dozen assumed names. The spectrum of these treatises included the social, economic, philosophical, and political convictions of the young intellectual.

Vratzian earned his teaching credential in 1910 and planned to complete his study of law, but such intentions were cut short by an intensified wave of persecution aimed specifically at the Armenian Revolutionary Federation. Hundreds of Federation members were arrested; many languished in murky dungeons until finally brought to trial before the Russian Senate in 1912. By then tsarist foreign policies necessitated new domestic policies and a majority of the accused were acquitted. Nonetheless, the months of insanitary prison life took a heavy toll of Dashnakist leaders.

As the arrests multiplied in 1910 and reached several of Vratzian's underground contacts, he was instructed to flee. Ironically, he found safety in the Ottoman Empire, for his party had been legalized there in 1908. Dashnaktsutun had collaborated with the 'Young Turks' (Ittihad ve Terakki) in establishing what seemed to be a liberal, constitutional government in 1908 and in deposing Sultan Abdul Hamid II in 1909. The Armenians looked hopefully to a new era in the multinational Ottoman

homeland. Although the Ittihadist-Dashnakist accord soon showed deep fissures, it was still possible in 1910 for the Armenian enemies of Tsar Nicholas II to seek asylum in Turkey.

In Constantinople, Vratzian was advised by his political comrades to proceed to Erzerum, the historic Armenian city of Garin. Educational restrictions having been eased during the post-1908 period, the Sanasarian Academy of Erzerum invited Vratzian to join the faculty as lecturer in the teacher-training programme, and the nearby Hripsimants secondary school for girls sought his services as teacher of history. During this time he edited the weekly, later bi-weekly, newspaper, *Harach* ('Forward'), the Armenian voice of the great Plateau:

Of all my duties, I felt happiest when I was with the youth. The youth of Garin was so vivacious, so lively, so clean, faithful, and honest, and in its feelings so simple and humanitarian. I loved this youth with all my soul. But the murderous Turk did not spare this wonderful generation. Few of them were left alive. The World War, exile, refugee life destroyed them. I remained in Garin for only a year. Thereafter, I have been to many countries and seen many people, but even at magnificent Rio de Janiero I have not seen the unparalleled sunset of Garin; standing before Niagara Falls, my mind's eye goes back to the bubbling, clear streams of Garin and to the purity of its unforgettable Armenians.

Not yet thirty years old, Simon Vratzian was widely recognized for his organizational and journalistic talents. In 1911 he accepted the editorship of *Hairenik* ('Fatherland'), Dashnaktsutun's principal organ in North America. Under Vratzian's direction the Boston-published paper was soon upgraded from a weekly to a tri-weekly journal, and the revolutionary linotype machine was introduced. Outside his editorial offices, Vratzian served as a party field worker, strengthening Dashnaktsutun in the rapidly growing Armenian communities of America. From 1911 to 1914 the *Hairenik*, under Vratzian's hand, optimistically expressed its faith in a brighter future for the Armenians. Tsarist Russia had altered its Armenophobia policy and since 1912 had become the outright champion of the Turkish Armenians, who still suffered arbitrary government and nomadic incursions despite the guarantees of the Young Turk rulers. Moreover, the European Powers had turned to the Armenian question once again and after months of negotiations had finally coerced the Ottoman government into promulgating a far-reaching programme of Armenian reforms. This programme, accepted in February 1914 was the most viable and promising reform measure since the Armenian question had been internationalized in the late 1870s.

Deep shadows were cast upon this optimism in the summer of 1914, however, as war clouds gathered over Europe. In late July, Austro-Hungary invaded Serbia, and within a week the major European States had been drawn into the conflict. To some political observers it seemed only a matter of time before the Ottoman Empire would cast its lot with the Central Powers, for German influence in Turkey had steadily increased during the preceding two decades.

Armenian leaders were painfully aware that, should Turkey join the Central Powers, war with Russia would result and the reform project for Turkish Armenia would be nullified. Even worse, the Armenian-populated territories on both sides of the Russo-Turkish border would become a

natural theatre of war. In view of the threatening situation, the Eighth General Congress of Dashnaksutun was summoned in July 1914 to determine a course of action. Simon Vratzian, as a representative of the United States organization, took leave from his editorial duties to attend the congress in Erzerum. He expected to be back at the *Hairenik* in a few months; however he did not return to the United States until twenty-five years had passed. By that time Vratzian was to have reached the most exhilarating and the most disheartening milestones in his narrative, as 'Don became Republic of Armenia. And Republic became the entire world. And the Armenian became a citizen of the world.'

During the Eighth Congress of Dashnaksutun, Vratzian assumed a dominant role and was elected to the Bureau, the party's supreme executive body. The Bureau was assigned the task of convincing the Ittihadist rulers of Turkey that a policy of neutrality would be in the best interests of the common homeland. But while the deliberations were still in progress, news of a total Ottoman mobilization reached Erzerum:

During the meetings, heated debates took place concerning the party's political orientation. A few delegates advocated either a strong Turkish or a strong Russian orientation, but the majority adhered to the European orientation, especially the representatives from America, Europe, and Constantinople. They considered the recently adopted European-sponsored reform measure a great victory and pinned their hopes on the enactment of those reforms. Rostom, one of the party founders, seemed to agree with everyone, regardless of the orientation espoused, if only peace might prevail in the land. He was terrified by the thought of war. 'God be loved,' he would say, 'let us have five or ten more years of peace and then we will have nothing more to fear.' His orientation was the orientation of peace, but how was it possible to find that bluebird, how could peace be guaranteed? Therein lay the question.

It was Sunday evening, July 20 [old style], when the din of drums was heard from various quarters of Garin. The town-criers, with the evil omens of drums and bugles, proclaimed news of a general mobilization of all men from twenty to forty-five years of age. Those who did not present themselves for induction within five days would be subject to severe punishment. That which we had feared had finally become a reality. The Ottoman fatherland was preparing for war. Black snow fell upon the Armenians.

The Congress hurriedly adjourned to allow delegates from foreign lands to leave. However, several members of the Bureau remained in Erzerum to confer with a Turkish delegation from Constantinople. During those negotiations, the Ittihadists urged the leaders of Dashnaksutun to facilitate Turkish conquest of the Caucasus by inciting rebellion among the Russian Armenians when the anticipated war erupted:

The General Congress had already adjourned when the Ittihadist representatives, Behaeddin Shakir and Naji Bey, together with a group of Moslem and Persian revolutionaries from the Caucasus, arrived in Garin. The negotiations lasted several days but ended with no positive results. The Ittihadists demanded that in case of war Dashnaksutun, in league with the other Caucasian peoples, foment a rebellion against Russia. As remuneration, following Ottoman victory, an autonomous

Armenia under Turkey's protection was promised. The members of the Bureau urged Turkey not to become embroiled in the war but to maintain her neutrality. While rejecting the Turkish proposal on the grounds that the Armenians could not instigate an uprising across the border in another country, the Bureau members assured the Ittihadist representatives that the Armenians of Turkey would fulfill all obligations and would remain faithful to the Ottoman homeland. The party had already decided to be completely loyal in case of war. The will of the Armenian people was the same. On the day following orders for mobilization, both the Armenian prelacy and Dashnaktsutjun had declared to the people that military service was a patriotic duty. The Armenians of Garin had hurried to the colours. Many small workshops and stores closed because the owners enlisted. Armenian women and girls, setting aside their housework, busily prepared linen, coats, and socks for the Ottoman army.

Nevertheless, the Armenian response did not please the ruling triumvirate of Turkey—Enver, Talaat, and Jemal. In 1915 these Ittihadist leaders cited it as one justification for the deportation or massacre of almost the entire Turkish Armenian population.

The Armenian stand at Erzerum dissolved the last semblance of an Ittihadist–Dashnakist accord. Indeed, even prior to the negotiations in Erzerum, the Ottoman government, in a secret treaty with Germany, had committed the Empire to war against Russia. Though the actual Turkish attack did not occur until late October, rampant Russophobia agitation and a concerted military build-up were in full swing by August. In the midst of these Turkish preparations, Simon Vratzian, a Russian subject, was arrested and charged as a tsarist spy. The two months he spent in the insect-infested, slimy Turkish jails were the most unbearable Vratzian had ever experienced:

It was so dark in the cell into which I was thrown that you couldn't see your finger even if you stuck it in your eye. I made a sound but there was no response. I was alone. I groped around finding the cell empty, only a mat on the floor. Despondent, I stretched out on my 'bed', but hardly had I done so when a very unusual movement began all over my body. The residents of the dungeon, apparently full of joy that they had a visitor, attacked in military formation from all directions—first the cavalry, the hopping fleas, then the infantry, the stinking bedbugs, and finally the artillery, the lice. Oh, the lice of Erzerum's prison—so huge and merciless! It was impossible to lie down; my entire body burned from the stings. I began to probe my way around in the dark, walking the entire night like a blind man with his arms stretched out in front of him.

Then when Vratzian was transferred to another prison:

I had scarcely closed my eyes when suddenly a sickening blop fell on my face. Instinctively I moved my hand to my face and felt. Under my fingers there streamed an indescribable putrid fluid. An entire bunch of bedbugs had fallen from the ceiling on to my face. I screamed in horror. Later the warden, Hasan Agha, explained that the intelligent bugs of his prison usually gathered together on the ceiling and selected their victim before deciding to fall.

Only through a series of accidents and quirks of fate did Vratzian evade his pending execution. At the end of September 1914, the escapee succeeded in slipping across the border into Russian Armenia. He was among the fortunate few, for the hundreds of other imprisoned Armenian intellectuals were soon to be slaughtered along with the Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire:

Now those dark days are in the past—the distant past, but they are always near, always torturingly present. You want not to remember, to forget, but you do not forget. You want to understand, but you do not understand. You want to be cured, but you are not cured. The wound is closed on the surface, but it is not healed within. And on dark nights when sleep flees from your eyes, your heart is in torment; your soul in turbulence. Your mind rebels. Why did it happen that way, why? And the many familiar, beloved faces pass silently in a row before your eyes. They pass quietly with a gaze fixed upon you as if to say, ‘You are still living, and by what right? Who gave you the privilege to live when we do not, when we do not exist?’

While the Armenians of Turkey shuddered at the prospect of war, Vratzian found that those of Russia anticipated renewed Russo-Turkish hostilities with near delight. In Tiflis, the Russian Armenian economic, political, and cultural centre, he was confronted with intense war fever. The prospect of the liberation of Turkish Armenia was the topic burning on everyone’s lips. From all parts of the Caucasus, men were converging on Tiflis to volunteer their services toward that goal. The Armenian National Bureau, representing various political, social, and philanthropic societies, was even then conferring with the Russian Viceroy for the Caucasus, Count I. I. Vorontsov-Dashkov, about the formation of several Armenian volunteer military units. The Romanov officials, having reversed their former Armenophobe policies, promised arms and supplies. With the project confirmed, the National Bureau appointed Simon Vratzian to a special committee to direct the recruiting, outfitting, and training of the volunteers. Thus, when the Ottoman Black Sea Fleet bombarded the Russian coastline in October 1914, four Armenian volunteer groups stood at the disposal of the Russian Caucasus Army Command.

During the latter part of 1914 and throughout 1915 the volunteer units participated in nearly every major campaign on the Caucasus front. While their number—several thousand men—was insignificant when compared to the total Russian strength, the volunteers as scouts, as guides, and as the daring *avant-garde* were an important contribution to the Russian war effort. So impressed was the Caucasus Army Command and so much popular enthusiasm did the volunteer contingents elicit, that the formation of three more such units was authorized in 1915.

The Armenians, however, were too naïve. While Tsar Nicholas II and his officials were painting scenes of Armenian autonomy and a glowing future, Russia, together with Great Britain and France, was busily planning the partition of the Ottoman Empire. Published wartime documents show that the tsarist government used the Armenians in the conquest of Turkish Armenia but that it had no intention of granting them self-rule in any form. They were courted as long as their assistance seemed desirable and necessary, but as soon as the basic Russian goals had been

attained, the Armenians were again subjected to traditional tsarist minority policies. Thus, at the end of 1915 the new Viceroy for the Caucasus, Grand Duke Nicholas Nicholaevich Romanov, ordered the Armenian volunteer units to disband and adopted stringent measures to curtail Armenian political activities. Strict censorship was again clamped on the newspapers, which were forbidden to discuss the volunteer units or the future of the Armenian people. The appeals of Vratzian, of the volunteer committee, and of the National Bureau were all in vain:

The evil spirit of the Grand Duke hovered over the Caucasus. The Turkish Armenians had been deported, partly massacred and partly annihilated along the routes. The intelligentsia had fallen victim to the Great Crime. Turkish Armenia lay in ruins and 'Humanitarian Europe' was secretly 'casting lots for the robe of the Armenians'. The Armenians of the Caucasus were in mourning. Black news came from across the border. Armenian Garin was desolate, as were historic Taron, Kghi, Erzinga, Baberd, Trebizond. . . . There were left no Armenians in Armenia.

Today, half a century later, it is easy to condemn as romantic the position that we took on the volunteer question, but at that time, during the first days of the Great World War, it seemed the only logical path to follow were the Armenian question finally to be solved. Were we wrong? Yes, we were wrong. Did we suffer for it? Yes, we suffered. But we were wrong and we suffered as an entire nation. It is painful to recall the events that were thought to be so brilliant and promising but that turned out so full of despair. It is especially bitter for those who personally participated in the events, men full of energy, faith, and dedication. But despite all this, the volunteer movement, as a national effort, opened a new page in the modern history of the Armenian people.

Disillusion weighed heavily on Simon Vratzian and every Armenian in 1916. The Armenians of Turkey had been decimated in the cruellest of tortures, survivors roamed aimlessly throughout the Caucasus, and the Armenians of Russia realized all too late that the tsarist government intended to populate occupied Turkish Armenia with Russian colonists. Steeped in this gloom, Vratzian rejected the opportunity to become an officer in the Russian Army when he was called up to fulfill his military obligation as a Romanov subject. Instead, he served as a common soldier in the 118th Reserve Battalion, an enormous, unwieldy throng which never left Tiflis and which undoubtedly would have disintegrated upon being sent anywhere:

Most of the soldiers were middle-aged Russian peasants, for the greater part illiterate and completely void of patriotism. The day's activities began at dawn with the singing of the morning prayer or sometimes *Bozhe Tsaria Khrani*, God Save the King. But almost everyone would sing *Bozhe Tsaria Khoroni*, which meant God Bury the King. The officers heard us but said nothing. Why arouse the dogs? After prayers there took place the mere formality of about five minutes of exercise followed by a ten-minute rest. For breakfast we got a piece of black bread and a cup of something that more or less resembled tea. At noon we received a large pot of soup and some bread. The soup was usually borshch in which the prevailing cabbage was accompanied by

bits of potatoes and beef. Armed with wooden spoons we all attacked. The clever ones moved rapidly and expertly; the slower ones remained hungry. Then, making good use of the pot, the soldiers would wash their socks and their whites—more correctly their blacks. At night the same soup would come back in the same pot. The soldiers swore at the bandit cooks and the bandit officers, but the greatest of the seven-layered curses fell upon the head of 'His Highness, the Tsar' and especially upon the treacherous empress who was 'selling Russia to her relative, Wilhelm'.

The common soldier was jolted out of his political inertia by the Russian Revolution of March 1917. The peoples of Transcaucasia—Georgians, Armenians, and Moslems—hailed the overthrow of the oppressive Romanov régime and its divide-and-rule policy. The era of the free, democratic, federated Russian republic seemed at hand. The Transcaucasians pledged loyalty to the Russian Provisional Government and to the even more influential soviets of soldiers', workers', and peasants' deputies that sprang up in every province of the former empire. At Tiflis the Regional Soviet Centre was established to co-ordinate the activities of the many local soviets, and Simon Vratzian, representing Dashnaksutun in the Centre, acted as spokesman for the Armenians of the Caucasus. Moreover, with freedom of expression now permitted, he was called upon to publish *Horizon*, the party's chief organ in the Caucasus.

In July 1917 Vratzian, as the delegate of the Caucasian Villagers' Organization, attended the Moscow State Conference, summoned by the Provisional Government to deal with the perplexing problems confronting Russia. There, before the cheering throng, orators extolled the brotherhood of the peoples of multinational Russia, urged far-reaching land reforms, and pledged themselves to advance the principles of democracy. The State Conference also reaffirmed Russia's loyalty to the Allies but failed to take any practical measures, claiming that the forthcoming All-Russian Constituent Assembly alone was vested with legislative prerogatives:

In Moscow, I met with Babushka, Ekaterina Breshko-Breshkovskaia, who despite her age continued an active participant in Russia's struggle for liberation. She introduced me to Victor Chernov, Rutnev, and Pereverzev. Later, as a representative of a sister organization, I was present at the Social Revolutionary caucus where nearly five hundred delegates heard Chernov explain the party's platform for the State Conference. I was disappointed, for he repeated the same trite phrases that had appeared daily in the newspapers—generalities and bitter snipes at the enemy, but nothing new. Much more impressive was Rutnev's clear and expressive presentation of the platform. The major parties of the day, the Social Revolutionary and the Social Democrat, held the fate of Russia in their hands, but they were unprepared to take the helm of government. The situation demanded decisive action at a time when they were soaring over the clouds with abstract speeches.

The Congress itself took on the form of a mass meeting, with long speeches of greater or lesser eloquence. The words 'freedom' and 'democracy' were enunciated with a special stress and were greeted by long thunderous applause. There was talk of the spreading anarchy and the economic crisis, both of which stemmed from the war, but no one was willing to mention a separate peace. Instead, strengthening the front

and signing a peace together with the other Allies was continually stressed. The appearance of Kerensky was greeted by a long, standing ovation. He delivered a moving, exhilarating address. The revolution had been accomplished bloodlessly, he cried, and the government would strive to defend the revolutionary freedoms without shedding blood, but, raising his fist toward the extreme left, he warned that, if they continued their destructive activities, they would be squelched with blood and iron. Unfortunately, the greater Kerensky's oratorical ability, the weaker his decisive action. 'Blood and iron' remained mere words.

In September 1917, before elections to the Constituent Assembly were held, the Armenians of Russia convened their own national congress at Tiflis. There, in the most representative Armenian convocation ever assembled in Russia, Simon Vratzian expounded the views of Dashnaktsutiun. He urged establishment of a democratic peace, collaboration with Georgians and Moslems of the Caucasus, implementation of basic agrarian and administrative reforms, and, in Armenian life, creation of a standing body to direct the activities of the Russian Armenians. In pursuance of the latter objective, the congress selected the National Council, composed of the most experienced Dashnakist, Armenian Social Revolutionary, Social Democrat, and Populist (Kadet) leaders. This body, of which Vratzian was a member, served as an unofficial Armenian government throughout the winter and spring months of 1917-18 and was destined to proclaim the independence of the Republic of Armenia in May 1918.

Soon after the adjournment of the National Congress, the Armenians, like the other peoples of Russia, elected delegates to the All-Russian Constituent Assembly, but the hopes centred on that body rapidly evaporated. The Bolsheviks in November 1917 seized control of central Russia and in January 1918 dispersed the newly convened anti-Bolshevik Constituent Assembly in Petrograd after only one session. The Bolshevik coup especially alarmed the peoples of the border provinces, for were Lenin to fulfil his pledge to recall the Russian armies, these regions would be exposed to German or Turkish invasion. In the Caucasus the front would be denuded and the Armenians would be subjected to the terrible fate of their Turkish Armenian brethren. Enver Pasha's Pan-Turanic armies would rapidly retrieve Turkish Armenia and strike into Transcaucasia. Overwhelmed by the impending disaster, the Armenians collaborated with the Georgians and Tatars in an attempt to preserve the continuity of government until, hopefully, the democratic forces of Russia could regain dominance. The outgrowth of this effort was the formation of the Transcaucasian Commissariat, an executive body, and the Transcaucasian Seim, a legislature, each composed of representatives of various anti-Communist organizations. Simon Vratzian, a member of the Seim, also served on the executive committee of the legislature's Armenian faction.

Transcaucasia's temporary government, though it had concluded a truce with Turkey, soon faced an all-out invasion. What had been feared came to pass, for the Bolshevik government recalled the Russian armies and the front in Turkish Armenia collapsed. More devastating was Soviet Russia's acceptance of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918, whereby all claims to Turkish Armenia were withdrawn and the Transcaucasian

provinces of Kars, Ardahan, and Batum were ceded to the Ottoman Empire. This action was taken even though Soviet Russia had no actual jurisdiction in the affected areas. The Turkish commanders could thus justify their new offensive by pointing to the terms of Brest-Litovsk. The hastily organized Transcaucasian military forces were no match for the Ottoman army, and mutual discord among Georgians, Armenians, and Tatars further paralysed the defence effort. Hoping to negotiate a satisfactory peace with the Turks, the Transcaucasian government dispatched a delegation, first to Trebizond, then to Batum; but even as they exchanged pleasantries at the conference table, the Turks continued their relentless invasion of the Russian Armenian provinces. Vratzian, together with the other Armenians of the delegation, was astounded by the Ottoman conditions for peace: the ceding of all Turkish Armenia, Kars, Ardahan, and Batum, two counties of the province of Tiflis, and more than half of Erevan province—the very heartlands of Russian Armenia. Indeed, the history of the Armenian people seemed at an end.

In the midst of chaos, both Georgians and Tatars sought their own salvation. For the Georgians this entailed an agreement with Germany assuring the Georgian provinces the protection of Berlin in return for abundant raw materials, whereas for the Tatars it was a simple matter to secure the benevolence of the Ottoman Turks, a racially and religiously related people. Thus, on May 26, 1918, the Georgians withdrew from the Transcaucasian Federation and declared Georgia a republic. The Tatars then immediately proclaimed the independence of Azerbaijan.

The Georgian and Azerbaijani moves threw the Armenians into utter turmoil. After bitter debate the National Council, in an act of desperation, declared the independence of the few Armenian areas not yet occupied by the Turks. Only through such a declaration and through the conclusion of an immediate peace with the invaders did survival seem possible. Fortunately, the proclamation of independence on May 28, 1918, coincided with a resolute defence in Erevan province where fierce battles raged for several days. For the first time since the Ottoman offensive had begun, the frenzied Armenians succeeded in hurling back the Turkish divisions, thus sparing Erevan and its immediate environs:

The classical tragedies, in hopeless situations, often end with the intervention of the gods. 'Deus ex machina.' On May 26, unexpectedly there occurred that 'Deus ex machina'. The Georgians declared the independence of Georgia and on the following day the Tatars declared Azerbaijan's independence. In the most crucial hour of the Armenians, our neighbours had abandoned us. We found ourselves like fish cast from the waters. Confusion reigned around the building of the Armenian National Council. The Council was in continuous session, but what could be done? Russia was far away, caught in the turmoils of civil war, the Allies were even farther, our neighbours were traitors, and from the south the Turkish hordes threatened to annihilate the entire Armenian nation.

But 'Deus ex machina'. There awakened the Armenian Spirit. On the Plain of Ararat, the barefooted Armenian people, with will of steel, stood furiously and resolutely against the packs of Vehib Pasha. Bash Abaran, Karakilisa, and Sardarabad became the fields of heroes. Leaving thousands of casualties, the Turks fled.

This resistance contributed to the Turkish decision to recognize the Armenian Republic in June 1918. But the Republic was very small, crammed with refugees, and lacking the bare essentials of life. During the remaining months of World War I, Armenia took special care not to antagonize the Turkish forces still occupying most of Russian Armenia and attempted, through diplomacy, to gain minor territorial concessions. Although such efforts were fruitless, the Allied victory in November 1918 heralded a new phase in the Republic's history. The Armenians now looked to the triumphant Powers to fulfil the many pledges made during the darkest months of war and massacre:

The Republic of Armenia emerged during the most critical period of the World War. Russia had pulled out of the ranks of the Allies, had knelt before Germany, and was in the throes of civil war. The 'maddened masses', starving for land and freedom, were butchering one another. The Ottoman government, taking advantage of the situation, attempted to extend its borders to the lands of the Caucasus and Transcaspia and to absorb millions of Moslems. Armenia, a small spot in that expanse, was caught up in a struggle of life or death. It seemed that there was no salvation for Armenia and for the Armenian people. But then the miracle happened. We received a telegram from abroad: 'The war is over. The Allies are victorious. Germany is in revolution. All the peoples of Austria have declared independence. France, Alsace, the shores of the Rhine, Serbia, Rumania have been evacuated. The British have taken Constantinople, Samson, Trebizond, Batum, Poti, Odessa. The Turks will be compelled to evacuate the Caucasus, which will then be occupied by the Allies, who will recognize our government. The separation of Constantinople and Turkish Armenia from Turkey has already been definitely decided upon. The two sectors of Armenia will without doubt be united. The Armenians, recognized as a belligerent nation, will be given a place at the Peace Conference.' Is it possible to imagine the effect of that telegram upon Armenia? What rejoicing both in the government and among the public! So, the Armenian people were destined to live.

The creation of the Republic brought Simon Vratzian to the milestone 'And Don became Republic of Armenia'. He did not, however, travel with the other Armenian leaders from Tiflis to Erevan, the newly designated capital, but journeyed instead to southern Russia on an urgent mission to secure aid for the isolated, vulnerable Republic. His task was to establish cordial relations with the Volunteer Army commander, General M. V. Alekseev. The leader of the anti-Bolshevik forces of southern Russia, as a result of Vratzian's persuasive arguments, granted Armenia three million cartridges, a number of machine guns, and a few car-loads of grain. He also authorized approximately two hundred Russian officers in Armenia to serve as cadres in the Republic's army.

While in southern Russia, Vratzian visited his birthplace, Great Sala, for what was to be the last time. His people were troubled by the political chaos in Russia and by the uncertainty of their future. The instincts of the Aniites seemed to warn of the coming military and economic upheavals, the eventual engulfment by the Soviet State, the 'anti-nationalist' repressions, and finally the disintegration of their closely knit communities. Despite these premonitions, the Aniites were proud of their Simavon and

of his work for the nation. They pledged assistance to the Armenian Republic and willingly maintained the Armenian consulate which was established in New Nakhichevan.

When I bid farewell to my beloved Nakhichevan, it never entered my mind that this was the last time that I was to see the sites and people of my boyhood home. What a stormy life this people, preserved from destruction, had endured through the centuries. What great feats it had accomplished, what great men it had bequeathed to the Armenians. I did not realize that New Nakhichevan was in its death throes. That which the tsars had failed to achieve, the Bolsheviks would succeed in doing a few years later. My beloved Nakhichevan was annexed to Rostov as its 'proletarian sector'. And now neither the name nor the people of Nakhichevan exists.

On his return to the Caucasus in October 1918, Vratzian met with his political associates in Tiflis and accepted a new assignment, that of convincing the minor Armenian political parties to support the Republic. Although Dashnaktsutun wielded more power than all other Armenian parties combined, it sought to enhance the prestige of the Republic by creating a coalition government. It was especially desirous of gaining the collaboration of the liberal Populist (Zhoghovrdakan) party, whose small membership was drawn from professional and commercial classes, government employees, and experienced administrators. Through skilful negotiations, extraordinary wit, and appeals to patriotism, Vratzian persuaded the Populist leaders to participate in a coalition. With two vital assignments already completed, he then accompanied several of the future Populist cabinet members to Erevan, setting foot in the Republic of Armenia for the first time.

In Erevan, Vratzian took his place in the legislature (Khorhurd), continued to serve on the Bureau of Dashnaktsutun, and again turned to journalism, editing the gazette of the Co-operative Association of Armenia, *Hayastani Kooperatsiia*, and the weekly, *Zang* ('Peal'). In the spring of 1919 Vratzian was called upon to grapple with the perplexing problem of the Turkish Armenian refugees, thousands of whom impatiently waited month after month to return to their native provinces. They were annoyed by the delay of the Allies in permitting the extension of the Republic's jurisdiction over Turkish Armenia and by the 'foreign' mannerisms of their Russian Armenian neighbours. They complained that the government was dominated by Russian Armenians and that Turkish or Western Armenian interests had been neglected. The internal division of the Armenian people, having arisen from the historical experience of living in different empires, was a difficult barrier to surmount. Only time would fully obliterate the division. Yet Vratzian joined the campaign against particularism and advocated the creation of a united Armenian people. On the first anniversary of the Republic from his effort and that of others issued the proclamation declaring the union of Eastern and Western Armenia. Symbolic of that union was the seating of twelve Turkish Armenians in the legislature.

Simon Vratzian's life was affected by many quirks of fate, but the circumstances that kept him in Erevan in 1919 were especially fateful. In need of moral and material support, the Armenian Republic prevailed upon Premier Hovhannes Kachaznuni to solicit aid in Europe and

America. The elderly Kachaznuni consented only on condition that Vratzian accompany him. With arrangements completed, Vratzian bid farewell to Erevan and journeyed with Kachaznuni to Tiflis, where visas were to be secured from the British military authorities. Kachaznuni's application was processed rapidly, but Vratzian was turned down, for the British attaché in charge of visas refused to permit a 'radical socialist' to leave the Caucasus. 'As a so-called "left" Dashnakist, I was not *persona grata* to the British. Apparently, my journey might have shattered the Empire of His Majesty.' Unable to reason with the obdurate British officer, both Kachaznuni and Vratzian returned to Erevan. Only after weeks of coaxing did the Premier agree to travel abroad without Vratzian. Had Vratzian received the visa, he most probably would not have entered the cabinet, become the premier, led an anti-Communist revolt, nor today be defamed by Soviet historians as an 'opportunistic adventurer' and a 'bandit chief'. But the if's of history are many.

Back in Erevan, Vratzian, apparently undaunted by the British insults, edited Dashnaktsutun's local organ, *Harach*, until the eve of the Republic's downfall at the end of 1920. He immersed himself in party activities, arranging for the Ninth General Congress of Dashnaktsutun, which during the summer of 1919 was to convene for the first time in an independent Armenia. At that assembly Vratzian reported to delegates from five continents on the undertakings and achievements of the Bureau since the Erzerum congress of 1914. Once again he was elected to the Bureau, which was, in fact, the primary policy-making body for the Republic of Armenia.

Because of his prominent position on the Bureau and his full-time party responsibilities, Simon Vratzian rejected a cabinet post until mid-1919. At that time, in deference to the entreaties of the new premier, Alexandre Khatisian, he accepted the combined ministries of Labour, Agriculture, and State Property. Khatisian, long-time mayor of Tiflis and an experienced administrator, was determined to bring greater efficiency and order to the government. Vratzian, also distinguished for his organizational abilities, was deemed indispensable to the success of the project:

I never contemplated accepting a ministry. I especially never imagined that I would be entrusted with agriculture and labour. I had neither the specialised training nor the necessary experience. True, when I had gone home for my summer vacations while a student at the Gevorgian Jemaran, I would work on a harvester in my Uncle Mikishka's fields just to pass the time away. The result was that I wrecked a few machines and cut off the feet of a few animals. But such experience did not qualify me to be the Minister of Agriculture.

Our land was poor and backward. There had been no agricultural organization in Armenia. As for the labour ministry, nothing remotely resembling that had existed. Now it was up to me to direct the ministries of Agriculture, State property, and Labour. But I was young and enthusiastic; nothing seemed impossible. Our generation refused to acknowledge weakness, nor did it attempt to spare itself. With our mind engaged in public life, our heart and soul belonged to the people. We denied ourselves a personal existence.

As a government official, Vratzian revamped the ministries under his jurisdiction, appointing a section chief for each and channelling to the

appropriate section the numerous matters coming to his attention. Because of the scope of his post, it was not unusual for Vratzian to deal daily with such diverse problems as land reform, peasant grievances, proposed agricultural innovations, settlement of refugees, repatriation, labour conditions, potential industrial development, and many petitions of a personal nature. By mid-1920 all arable land was seeded for the first time since the outbreak of the World War, Armenia's first tractor was in operation, and mining and agricultural experts from Tiflis and southern Russia had been employed to study Armenia's economic potential. There was now greater hope for a lasting independent Armenia even though the Allies had still failed to guarantee the security of the Republic and to award it the Turkish Armenian provinces.

Events in Russia boded ill for the Republic of Armenia, however, for Bolshevik forces had nearly crushed the Volunteer armies by the summer of 1920 and had even established Soviet rule in neighbouring Azerbaijan. Communist propagandists were also active in Armenia. They urged the peasants to overthrow the Erevan government and to denounce the European Powers, which promised much but gave nothing. With such provocation, Bolshevik slogans appeared in several cities during the May Day celebrations of 1920, and an uprising occurred in Alexandropol, where Soviet order was proclaimed:

The events in Alexandropol left a deep impression on Erevan. The Bureau of Dashnaksutiun took control and declared the country in a state of emergency. The Bureau feared that the trouble might spread and give the Red Army an excuse to intervene. And that fear, of course, was not without foundation. Today they blame us, saying that if we had been farsighted we would at that moment have handed the government over to the Bolsheviks. In that case, they say, Armenia would have escaped the great misfortunes that were to befall her. It is easy to be a prophet after the event. But think for a moment; was that possible in those days, just before the Treaty of Sèvres was signed, at a time when the Allies were still the directors of the world, at a time when, beside the 'Great Allies', there stood the 'Little Ally', Armenia? Yes, the Bureau decided to squelch the Bolshevik rising at any price.

Granted dictatorial powers by the legislature, the 'Bureau-Government', headed by Hamo Ohandjanian, delegated to Simon Vratzian and Ruben Ter Minasian unlimited authority to re-establish order and to quell the unrest. During the upheaval numerous official appeals and declarations to the soldiers and citizenry of Armenia were penned by the experienced journalist. The rebellion was soon suppressed, but the crisis dealt a severe blow to Armenia's confidence and prestige.

Scarcely recovered from the anti-government unrest of May 1920, the Republic of Armenia faced the more serious threat of being crushed between Soviet Russia and Nationalist Turkey, the two outcasts of Europe who were extending the hand of friendship across Transcaucasia. While the Allies conveyed sympathetic messages but no material assistance to the Armenians, the Bolsheviks and Nationalists delivered ultimatums, which in September 1920 were followed by a Turkish invasion:

For Mustafa Kemal, the time to attack Armenia was most opportune. The Greeks had ceased their movements along the Izmir front and

Venizelos was groping for an understanding. France was seeking the friendship of Kemal, even at the price of evacuating Cilicia. The Italians were openly aiding the rebels in Anatolia. Soviet Russia was also helping. There was no real power nor real will to defend Armenia from the Turkish onslaught. On September 23, without a declaration of war, the Turkish armies struck across the Armenian boundaries.

The Armenian forces could not withstand Mustafa Kemal's army, and the Republic was confronted with the alternatives of being totally overrun or else Sovietized. There was no real choice, and in November 1920 the Bureau-Government tendered its resignation. To Simon Vratzian fell the premiership with the responsibility of securing the best possible terms from the Bolsheviks. His primary duty was to deliver Armenia into Russian Soviet hands before Turkish sabres cast their shadow over the remainder of Armenia. 'Under these circumstances and with heavy heart, I was compelled to accept that "honour" which was bestowed upon me. It is obvious that it was no pleasure for me to accept, but the party had decided and I was obliged to submit. In all Armenia, there was not a man who envied me at this moment.'

During his negotiations with the Soviet delegation, Vratzian received written assurances that the lands seized by Russia's Turkish ally would be restored to Armenia, that no Armenian would be persecuted for his previous anti-Communist activities, that a temporary Dashnakist-Bolshevik coalition would rule, and that any political leaders who so desired would be permitted to leave the country. The agreement signed, Simon Vratzian, on December 2, 1920, dolefully announced to the Armenian people that the Republic's cabinet had voluntarily transferred its authority to the new government of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Armenia. There was no other way.

Seemingly, the history of the Republic of Armenia and of Vratzian's role in it should have ended there. However, after two months of Bolshevik domination, the distraught Armenian people again turned to Vratzian for direction. The new Communist rulers had voided the agreement of December 2, imprisoned many former officials, and exiled nearly the entire army officer corps. And as the *Cheka*, the secret police, reared its head in Erevan spreading terror and violence, the peasantry of Armenia, having expected salvation from Russia, were instead robbed of their few remaining possessions by armed Soviet commissars:

Over the entire extent of Armenia died the freedom of mind and public life. Aside from Bolshevik rallies, there was not one gathering. Espionage became the rule throughout the land. For days entire sectors of the city were sealed off by troops and machine guns as the *Cheka* conducted its searches. In Armenia the prime manifestation of the Bolshevik régime was the total violation of law and civil rights, the most treacherous and destructive being the Communist economic policy. Most Bolsheviks who came to Armenia were ignorant and immoral; many had a criminal past and, like vultures, they attacked the Armenian people through legalized robbery. Requisitions became the guiding principle of the government. 'Requisition the goods of those who have requisitioned' was their motto. The populace was terrified and offered no resistance. And how could they resist, for the requisitions were conducted in the name of 'revolutionary order'. Those who opposed

were 'enemies of the state' and 'counter-revolutionaries', and who did not know what would happen to the 'counter-revolutionary enemies of the dictatorship of the proletariat'!

'The dictatorship of the proletariat cannot take firm root in any land without having first passed through the fire of civil war,' was repeated time and again by the Bolsheviks at their rallies and in their publication, *Komunist*. And truly the Bolsheviks did all in their power to create civil strife. The young ones were very disgruntled that 'counter-revolution' had not appeared in Armenia. The prisons were full; the Armenian army officers had been exiled; every day there were searches and requisitions; the provinces groaned under the official plunder. Yet the people suffered quietly. From all over Russia the hungry and half-naked Bolsheviks fell like savages upon the populace. Nevertheless 'counter-revolution' did not flare up and the 'treacherous Dashnaks' not only did not rebel but did all in their power to forestall any outburst.

Vratzian, one of the Republic's few leaders still at liberty, risked his own safety by sharply criticizing the policies of the new régime. He warned that the nation would fall into utter ruin and chaos should the persecutions and requisitions continue. These admonitions went unheeded, and by February 1921 Vratzian was forced underground to escape the wrath he had provoked among his Bolshevik opponents:

Confined to my hiding place, I was tortured by my thought. I, who was a constant champion of Armeno-Russian friendship, culturally, intellectually, and politically, I, who believed that Soviet Russia and Armenia could exist side by side and work together, I, whose mental and moral character had been moulded in the baptismal of Russian culture, it was I who now with eyes wide open was witnessing the destruction of all my hopes. What business did people of the Sarmatian plains have in the mountains of Armenia, bringing with them their foreign ideologies? Why was it necessary for the Armenian Karapet to subject himself to the Russian Ivan? Why did he have to think and feel like the Russian Ivan, to put on his head the Russian 'boboz' rather than the Armenian 'papakh', to eat borshch rather than bozbash? I loved Pushkin and the wonderful Chekhov, but I loved equally and more our Armenian authors and poets. 'Volga, Volga' was near to my heart, but closer still was 'Mother Araxes', to which I clung with all my being. Why had these armed men come to our country, and why were they forcing us to think like they thought, to sing like they sang, to dress like they dressed, to eat and drink as they did?

The silent dissatisfaction of the masses was gradually transformed into loud and angry protest. By mid-February armed bands had expelled the Soviet commissars from the highlands near Erevan. One village after another joined the uprising, which now became the 'February Rebellion'. By the morning of February 18 the insurgents had nearly surrounded Erevan, and the Soviet government and Red Army were forced to flee to the Moslem-populated districts south of the capital. By early afternoon that day, the tricolour flag of the former republic once again waved above Erevan:

Endless waves of humanity filled the streets surging forward like a swollen river. Men and women, old and young had poured outdoors.

Everywhere fluttered thousands of tricolours. From right and left came vigorous applause and hurrahs. Acquaintances and unknowns hugged and kissed us. The gunfire had not ceased, but it was impossible to drown the sounds of 'Mer Hairenik'. The military band, only yesterday playing the 'International', was today, amidst the bursting emotions of the populace, playing the national anthem. On one street corner surrounded by a large group was standing Oliver Baldwin, an English officer, who had ceremoniously placed Trotsky's picture upon a bonfire. Suddenly I felt myself grabbed by many hands and found myself bouncing in the air amidst wild applause and exclamations. My appeals and threats were of no avail, and my every effort to free myself was in vain. Like an inanimate object I was tossed about, dropped and lifted, passed from hand to hand, hugged and kissed. And all along the route from Abovian Street to the Parliament building, thousands and thousands rang out with 'Mer Hairenik'. Rarely in the history of the collective life of the Armenian people has there been another moment when there existed more indivisibility and unity than on that day in Armenia.

As the rebellion gained momentum, the need for centralized direction became urgent. All looked to Simon Vratzian, Armenia's last premier, to lead the insurgent nation. Having constantly urged his people to be patient and to collaborate with the Soviet régime, Vratzian now accepted the will of that people and took charge of the Committee for Salvation of the Fatherland. The Committee's jurisdiction extended over Armenia's central provinces, which had been cleared of Soviet troops. Meanwhile, Vratzian repeatedly appealed to the Allied Powers for assistance, though it was obvious that little material support would be forthcoming. The Armenian rebels, alone and isolated, dared defy the Soviet XI Army for two months. However, with Bolshevik reinforcements pouring in from Soviet Azerbaijan and Soviet Georgia, it was apparent that the uprising soon would be quelled.

In April 1921, with the Red Army closing in around Erevan, the rebel militia, the Salvation Committee, and several thousand civilians retreated from Erevan to the highlands of Zangezur, the south-eastern province along the Persian border. There they joined the local anti-Communist forces to establish the last non-Soviet government of Armenia, that of Lernahayastan ('Mountainous Armenia'), with Simon Vratzian as premier. Some authors, both Soviet and non-Soviet, condemn Vratzian for continuing the battle when it was clear that the insurrection would be crushed in a matter of time. They accuse him of prolonging the chaos in Armenia and adding to the suffering of the Armenian people by condoning continued defiance:

Nearly a half century has passed since those tempestuous days and still history has not spoken its last, and men with heated passions argue and accuse one another. For some, the uprising is considered an 'adventure' and 'treachery' against Armenia. For others, it was the supreme expression of patriotism. There is one thing, however, that is clear and indisputable. Those who sacrificed their lives for February 18 did so of their own will in order that the fatherland and the Armenian people might live freely and determine their own fate on their own soil. The opposing side enforced its will with foreign bayonets and alien

ideologies. February 18 was the struggle between freedom and oppression. And oppression was victorious because the little fellow dared enter the field against gigantic Russia. But a half century has passed and the Soviet leaders have still not ventured to ask the subject people their opinion of the ruling order.

Had Simon Vratzian been motivated by personal ambition, the charges against him might in part be justified, but such was not the case. Vratzian realized that the struggle was lost, but he was also aware that the Moscow government had awarded Zangezur to Soviet Azerbaijan. He would keep up the resistance until the inclusion of Zangezur into Soviet Armenia was assured. This was the major issue in negotiations between the Soviet and rebel Armenian representatives who met during the spring and early summer of 1921. Meanwhile certain hopeful signs appeared, for Lenin called a halt to the militant communism which had fomented the revolt. He criticized the Bolsheviks of the Caucasus for their overzealousness and sent to Armenia the moderate, experienced, and respected Alexandre Miasnikian to replace the doctrinaire, narrow-minded, bungling Bolsheviks of the first Soviet government. Alexandre Miasnikian, like Vratzian a native of New Nakhichevan and a descendant of Ani, slowed the pace of regimentation and gave definite guarantees that Zangezur would remain Armenian. In view of these favourable changes, Vratzian, together with part of the militia and several thousand civilians, forded the Araxes River in July 1921 and sought asylum in Iran. Never again was he to see his native land, for he had reached the milestone, 'And Republic became the entire world. And the Armenian became a citizen of the world.'

For nearly half a century Simon Vratzian was a 'citizen of the world'. Although discouraged and at times living in extreme poverty, he did not succumb to the lethargy and demoralization that incapacitated some of his associates. Through continual constructive labours, he rebuilt a shattered life. After retreating from Armenia in 1921, Vratzian remained in Tabriz a few months. But the Iranian government, despite having always maintained cordial relations with the former Armenian Republic, was now very sensitive to Soviet pressure and asked Vratzian to leave the country. He complied with the request and set out for Europe via Tehran, Bombay, Alexandria, and Constantinople. In 1923 many Dashnakist leaders, Vratzian among them, met in Vienna to reassess the role of their shaken organization and to determine its stand toward Soviet Armenia. There, Vratzian was appointed to a special committee to restore and strengthen the party's chain of command. This committee, operating from Geneva during 1923 and 1924, reunited the world organization of Dashnaktsutjun and arranged for the party's Tenth General Congress, which convened at Paris in 1925.

The Tenth Congress met under circumstances very different from those of the 1919 congress in Erevan. In the intervening years Armenia had been Sovietized and the European Allies had recognized Turkish control over all Turkish Armenia as well as much of the territory of the former republic. The Tenth Congress, addressing itself to the task of revitalization, returned Vratzian to the Bureau and commissioned him, along with Arshak Djamalian, to re-establish the party's first journal, *Droshak* ('Banner'), which had been published in Geneva from 1890 to 1914. The

new series *Droshak*, a monthly appearing in Paris from 1925 to 1933, remains an important record for the student of the party Dashnaktsutian and of the Republic of Armenia.

During these years in Paris, Vratzian completed his distinguished study, *Hayastani Hanrapetutian* ('Republic of Armenia'), an authoritative, thorough history of independent Armenia. It endures as an indispensable source in modern Transcaucasian and Armenian history and in Soviet-Turkish relations. A tribute to Vratzian is his ability to discuss without obvious emotion the events which swirled about him in the preceding years. He calls attention to his own and his government's shortcomings, approaches the question from several points of view, and attempts to evaluate the circumstances that led to the rise and fall of the Republic.

Paris was the most important and cosmopolitan émigré centre in the world during the interwar years. Former premiers, ministers, and officials abounded there. They were often invited to conferences, lectures, and banquets sponsored by one society or another. For Vratzian, these were usually tedious affairs, yet he attended them so that the Republic of Armenia should be represented. One such gathering left a deep impression on him. He was seated next to the representative of Poland. The Pole, noting 'Armenia' on Vratzian's place card, announced that his own ancestors had been Armenian. As it turned out, they had come to Poland from the Volga. Indeed, the Polish representative was a descendant of Ani and belonged to that group which, several centuries before, had parted company from the main body at the entrance to the Crimea. Both men were amazed when the Hungarian representative across the table interjected that he too was of Armenian ancestry and that his forebears had gone to Hungary from Poland. Thus in Paris sat the representatives of Armenia, Poland, and Hungary—all the descendants of Ani:

From that banquet nothing has remained in my mind. And the League of Nations together with its many organizations has turned into a faded memory. But still before my eyes are the joyful faces of the Pole 'of Armenian origin' and the Magyar 'of Armenian origin' who had met a third 'of Armenian origin', from whom they had for centuries been separated. Oh! the destiny of the Armenians—down through the centuries the blood flows, down through the centuries, the blood speaks.

During the 1930s, one of Vratzian's two main literary endeavours was the preparation and compilation of *Divan H. H. Dashnaktsutian* ('Archives of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation'), a two-volume work dealing with the party's first decade of activities, 1890–1901, and including many informative articles and useful documents. Of equal importance was the founding of the bi-monthly historical, cultural, and literary journal, *Vem*. With contributions from well-known authors and with high literary standards, this periodical, published for only six years, was a significant contribution to Armenian letters of the decade.

In 1936 Vratzian was called to South America to strengthen the party organization there. During the several months he spent in South America, he also gathered material for a history of the Armenian communities of that continent, subsequently published in *Vem*. He painfully recalls his visit to a suburb of Sao Paulo, Brazil:

A handful of Armenian refugees, having landed in this muddy village, were attempting to adapt to an agrarian existence. Arriving in the town under a light rain, we were greeted by the peal of the church bells and the cheers of the crowd. Inside the church a programme of songs, recitations, and addresses awaited us. All spoke with love and longing for Mother Armenia. How was I to reply to the appeal in their eyes? A deep sorrow clung to my soul and weakened my will. I waited in horror for the moment I would be obliged to speak. What was I to say to this crowd, plucked from its native soil and flung upon distant shores, to this people who had come to hear words of hope from me—O holy naïveté—to seek salvation in what I said. What hope could I inspire, I, a man who had himself lost his fatherland, who was homeless and a vagabond. When at last I was called upon, I stood for what may have been a brief moment but what to me felt like eternity. The faces concentrated upon me seemed to say, 'Why have you brought us to this place? Give us our fatherland. Take us from this foreign soil.'

What I spoke that day, how I spoke that day, I do not know. There remains in my mind only the Armenian church full of people, who with parched hearts had come in search of a cure for their distress in the words of a compatriot. But what could that compatriot give them, when his heart also thirsted and was parched!

Back in Europe, Vratzian continued his political and literary activities until summoned as a field worker in 1939 by the North American Central Committee of Dashnaktsutun. Hoping to return in a few months to Paris to his highly esteemed *Vem*, Vratzian crossed the Atlantic once more and re-entered the United States of America after an absence of twenty-five years. Again, however, he was affected by the wiles of fortune, for hardly had he reached the United States when war inflamed Europe once more and instead of spending one year in America he remained twelve years. During that time Vratzian served as a field worker and contributed many analytical articles to *Hairenik*, the newspaper he had edited before he went to Erzerum in 1914. He also published six *Hairenik* annuals from 1943 to 1948. Moreover, having at his disposal Dashnaktsutun's archives in Boston, Massachusetts, Vratzian began the necessary research for a history of the party. Though he was called away to another assignment before completion of this project, a part of his findings was published in *Hushapatum H. H. Dashnaktsutian* ('Historical Collection of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation').

In 1951 Simon Vratzian, then a citizen of the United States as well as of the world, was prevailed upon to interrupt his literary work and to turn back across the Atlantic, this time to the Near East. One of the principal Armenian schools of the diaspora, the Collège Arménien (Nshan Palandjian Jemaran) of Beirut, Lebanon, had been left without a president. The void was great, and responsible Armenians looked to Vratzian to fill it. From 1951 until his death in May 1969 he served the Collège and the large Beirut Armenian community. He added greatly to the prestige of the school, participated in the revision of its curriculum, and had travelled the world over on its behalf, soliciting moral and material support.

Nearly seventy years old when he left Boston for Beirut, Simon Vratzian did not cease his literary and political activity. Though no longer willing to

remain on the Bureau of Dashnaksutium, he none the less assisted the younger men who took his place and who turned to him for advice. On occasion he was involved in the internal strife which rocked his party, but he always commanded the respect of his people. Among his post-1951 publications are a study of Russian-Turkish-Armenian relations and a collection of documents, letters, and communiqués entitled *Hin Tghter Nor Patmutian Hamar* ('Old Papers for Modern History'). A recent work, a compilation of the papers of Hovhannes Kachaznuni, contains the correspondence and memoirs of a former Armenian premier, who in a period of disillusionment repudiated Dashnaksutium and returned to his Sovietized native land to die in oblivion. It is *Kianki Ughinerov*, Vratzian's six-volume autobiographical and historical work, published 1955-67, which has, however, left the strongest impact upon his readers. Literary and personal, it relates episodes in the life of Simon Vratzian from his youth through the anti-Soviet rebellion of 1921. The author disclaims being a true literary writer, but critics would deem him either naïve or modest. The flow, style, and colour of his brilliant descriptions have won him acclaim as a *littérateur*. But Simon Vratzian did not write for the critics and was unconcerned with their appraisals. He wrote *Kianki Ughinerov* for the ordinary Armenian. It was his intention to evoke emotion and to inspire determination in a generation of Armenians reared in the dispersion. He demanded of his readers 'a drop of tears', for 'this is my story, and, changing the names, the story of all Armenians, past and present':

Dear friends, I repeat, as long as the everlasting flower blooms at Sevan, as long as Masis guards the lands of the Armenians, as long as Armenian is spoken, felt, and lived in Armenia, the Armenian and Armenia will persevere into eternity. And if you can not have the everlasting flower of Sevan in your hand, then take it and keep it tightly in your breast evermore. As long as your heart nourishes Armenia's flowers, time and distance will be powerless to destroy our Armenian spirit, whether in the orient or the occident.

Simon Vratzian is one of an all but vanished generation. What is vague history to many was vivid reality to the patriarch: childhood in Great Sala and southern Russia in the 1880s, involvement in the revolutionary movement in the 1890s, student at the Gevorgian Jemaran and participant in the political turbulence of the 1900s, journalist and public servant during the reaction and the optimism of the 1910s, premier and rebel leader during the 1920s, editor and citizen of the world in the 1930s, field worker and researcher in the 1940s, college president and author in the 1950s, man of indomitable will in defying near blindness to remain productive in the 1960s. This has been the life of Simon Vratzian, and, changing the names, this has been the pattern of life of his generation. It was a generation imbued with idealism and self-sacrifice, thirsting for the new knowledge and immersing itself in the history, literature, and philosophy of its own people and of all humanity. It was this generation that led the Armenian emancipatory struggle and experienced the exaltation and the anguish that rapidly succeeded one another. It was the generation that witnessed the annihilation of half its nation, the crumbling of empires and the emergence of new sovereign states. It was the generation that forged the Republic of Armenia, strove against insurmountable odds to preserve its independence, and then tragically delivered it to the Soviets.

The generation, its mission in part fulfilled, vanishes. Both the generation and the mission are either violently condemned or deeply revered, either labelled as the destroyers of a people or hailed as the builders of a nation. To Simon Vratzian, his generation played the role assigned to it by history. Considerations, internal and external, world and national, had determined its path. That path was the last in the long journey which had begun centuries before—And Ani became Volga, Volga became Crimea, Crimea became Don, Don became Republic of Armenia, and Republic became the entire world—the story of Simon Vratzian.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

All extracts in this article have been taken from Vratzian's six-volume work, *Kianki Ughinerov*, Cairo and Beirut, 1955–67.

Vratzian's major publications are as follows:

Psak Zhoghovadsu (Crown Collection). Moscow, 1910.

Hairenik batsarik (Hairenik Special, devoted to Sassun). Boston, 1912.

Hairenik batsarik (Hairenik Special, devoted to the New Sanasarian Academy). Boston, 1914.

Ankakh ev Miatsial Hayastan (Independent and United Armenia). Erevan and Boston, 1920.

Banaktsutjunner Azg. Patvirakutian ev Hayastani Hanrapetutian midjev (Negotiations Between the National Delegation and the Republic of Armenia). Boston, 1920.

Kharkhapumner (Gropings). Boston, 1924.

Mayis 28 (May 28). Paris, 1928.

Hayastani Hanrapetutium (Republic of Armenia). Paris, 1928; 2nd ed. rev., Beirut, 1958.

Mshakuiti Or (Day of Culture). Paris, 1932.

Divan H. H. Dashnaksutian (Archives of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation). Boston, 1934–38. 2 vols.

Hayastane Bolshevikian Ludsi ev Trkakan Sali midjev (Armenia Between the Bolshevik Yoke and the Turkish Anvil). Boston, 1941. Second edition, revised, Beirut, 1953, entitled 'Armenia Between the Bolshevik Hammer and the Turkish Anvil'.

Armenia and the Armenian Question. Boston, 1943.

Hairenik Taregirk (Hairenik Annual). Boston, 1943–48. 6 vols.

Armenia y la Cuestion Armenio. Buenos Aires, 1944.

H. H. Dashnaksutian Vatsunamiak (Sixtieth Anniversary of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation). Boston, 1950.

Hushapatum H. H. Dashnaksutian (Historical Collection of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation). Boston, 1950.

Kianki Ughinerov (Along Life's Ways). Cairo and Beirut, 1955–67. 6 vols.

Hin Tgher Nor Patmutian Hamar (Old Papers for Modern History). Beirut, 1962.

Hovhannes Kachaznuni: Het Mahu Patmvadskner, Husher, Hodvadsner, Namakner (Hovhannes Kachaznuni: Posthumous Accounts, Memoirs, Articles, Letters). Beirut, 1965.

A bibliography of Vratzian's periodic literature would include more than a thousand articles. In addition he has edited the following newspapers and journals:

Nor Kiank (New Life). New Nakhichevan, 1907.

Haradj (Forward). Garin-Erzerum, 1910–11.

Hairenik (Fatherland). Boston, 1912–14.

Horizon (Horizon). Tiflis, 1917–18.

Zang (Peal). Erevan, 1918–19.

Surhandak (Messenger). Tiflis, 1918.

Hayastani Kooperatsia (The Cooperative of Armenia). Erevan, 1918–19.

Haradj (Forward). Erevan, 1919–20.

Dirkerum (On the Battleline). Kars, 1920.

Hayastani Dzain (Voice of Armenia). Paris, 1922–23.

Droshak (Banner). Paris, 1927–33.

Vem (Stone). Paris, 1933–39.